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I bring you greetings on behalf of the Governor. He was sorry he couldn't be with you today but sends his congratulations on 35 years of service.

I would echo that sentiment and want to thank you and the many Children Inc. supporters for everything you have done on behalf of Kentucky children over the past three and a half decades. Whether it's your STARS rated day care, afterschool programs, programs for teen moms, service learning, professional training or another undertaking -- your organization provides quality programs that focus on what's best for kids. Through your programs and services, you have touched thousands of children and their families in the northern Kentucky area and made a real difference in their lives.

I especially want to thank your founder and executive director Rick Hulefeld. For the better part of his life, he has worked tirelessly for the children of the commonwealth. Kentucky education has no finer ally.

Children Inc. has set the area's young children on the path for success in school and in life. It's our job to keep them there.

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In the past few years Kentucky has embarked on a mission in education – to establish Next-Generation teaching and learning in our schools – to provide our children with the 21st century skills they need to be successful in our highly competitive global economy.

Our vision is – every child proficient and prepared for success.

So what do we mean by success?

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We're striving for College and/or Career Readiness for ALL.

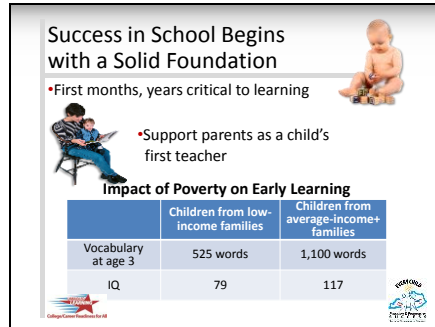
We want every child in our state to be prepared for what lies ahead after high school -- whether it be postsecondary education at a 2 or 4-year college or university, a job training program, an apprenticeship or the military. We want our kids to be prepared for LIFE!

The future economic development of Kentucky depends on our ability to educate the children of today, and prepare them for the jobs of tomorrow.

If WE are to successfully fulfill our vision for the next generation, we also must address what happens with a child's learning BEFORE they get to school.

We must develop Next-Generation Early Childhood Education.

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Success in school begins with a solid foundation.

Learning doesn't start the first day a child walks into preschool or kindergarten.

It starts at birth. It starts in the home. As you know, those first months and years are critical to a child's learning later on in elementary, middle and high school.

We must recognize that parents are a child's first teacher and must do what we can to support parents as they start the process of teaching and learning with their children. This is especially important in low-income families where parents may lack strong literacy skills themselves. If we don't reach out to these parents, up to a quarter of our children are destined repeat the cycle of poverty and poor education when THEY have children.

Take a look at the impact that poverty can have on a child's early learning. Researchers have documented that children from low-income families have a vocabulary of about 525 words by age 3. Compare that with children from average- and above average-income families who have a vocabulary about twice that – about 1,100 words.



That clearly has an impact on intelligence – children from disadvantaged homes had an IQ of 79 verses that of 117 for children from advantaged homes. There's an achievement gap even at this early age –resulting from the relative wealth a child happens to be born into.

The bottom line is that children from disadvantaged homes enter kindergarten at least two grade levels behind their better off peers. And unfortunately children who start behind tend to stay behind.

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Benefits of Early Childhood Education

- Perform better in school
- Less likely to need remediation
- More apt to graduate from high school
- More likely to go on to a four-year college or seek postsecondary training
- Get better jobs
- Earn higher incomes
- Less likely to face crime, drugs, dependence on welfare, teenage pregnancy, mental health problems and health care issues



That's one reason high-quality, early childhood education programs, including the ones you run, as well as state- and federally-funded preschool programs are so important. They can work to close that gap before a child starts school.

The benefits of early childhood education are well documented.

- Children who participate in a quality preschool program perform better in school – from kindergarten all the way through 12th grade and
- less likely to need remediation

They are:

- more apt to graduate from high school
- more likely to go on to a four-year college or seek some other postsecondary training
- get better jobs, earn higher incomes and are less likely to face crime, drugs, dependence on welfare, teenage pregnancy, mental health problems and health care issues



But why? In a recently released study on the impact of preschool – one of the biggest and longest studies to date –

the authors theorized that intensive early childhood experiences build intellectual skills, social adjustment and motivation that helps children move through their high-risk environments with more positive outcomes.

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**Cost/Benefit Ratio
of Early Childhood Education**

- University of Kentucky Study:
Every \$1 invested in expanding quality preschool will yield a return of \$5 in benefits
- TEK Recommendation:
include sufficient funding in the state budget to improve access to and enrollment in effective, high-quality, state-funded preschool programs



And then there is the economic benefit:

A University of Kentucky study found that every \$1 invested in expanding quality preschool in the state would yield a return of \$5 in benefits for individuals and the state as a whole – through things like increased earnings, tax revenue, less criminal behavior, reduced mental health costs and other measures.

No other social program for children and youth has been shown to have that level of return on investment.

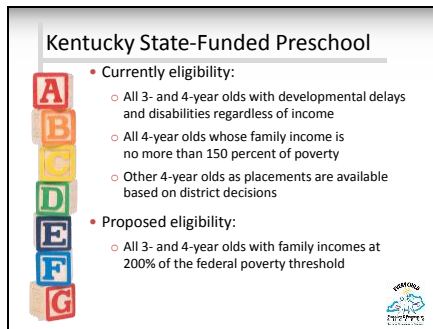
So, if ever there was an argument for expanded funding for preschool – that would be it.

Pay now, or pay an even bigger price later.

In fact, one of the recommendations of the Governor's Transforming Education in Kentucky or TEK task force was for lawmakers to include sufficient funding in the state budget to improve access to and enrollment in effective, high-quality, state-funded preschool programs.

Unfortunately there wasn't enough money to go around this past session to do that. But, we are not giving up the fight and will continue to support expanded preschool.

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The slide is titled "Kentucky State-Funded Preschool". On the left side, there is a vertical stack of colorful alphabet blocks with the letters A, B, C, D, E, F, and G. The slide content is organized into two main sections: "Currently eligibility:" and "Proposed eligibility:". Each section contains a bulleted list of criteria. The "Currently eligibility:" section lists three points: "All 3- and 4-year olds with developmental delays and disabilities regardless of income", "All 4-year olds whose family income is no more than 150 percent of poverty", and "Other 4-year olds as placements are available based on district decisions". The "Proposed eligibility:" section lists one point: "All 3- and 4-year olds with family incomes at 200% of the federal poverty threshold". In the bottom right corner, there is a small logo for the "Kentucky Department of Education" with the text "Ensuring a bright future for every child".

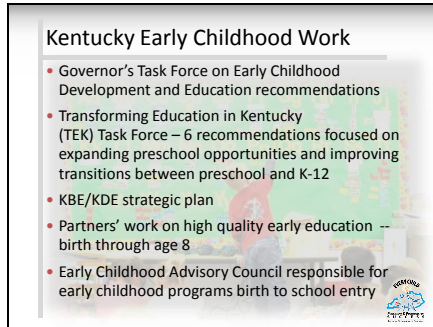
Kentucky State-Funded Preschool

- **Currently eligibility:**
 - All 3- and 4-year olds with developmental delays and disabilities regardless of income
 - All 4-year olds whose family income is no more than 150 percent of poverty
 - Other 4-year olds as placements are available based on district decisions
- **Proposed eligibility:**
 - All 3- and 4-year olds with family incomes at 200% of the federal poverty threshold

AS things stand now, eligibility for Kentucky state-funded preschool is limited to:

- All 3- and 4-year olds with developmental delays and disabilities regardless of income
 - All 4-year olds whose family income is no more than 150 percent of poverty
 - Other 4-year olds as placements are available based on district decisions
- We would like to broaden that scope to also include:
 - All 3- and 4-year olds with family incomes at 200% of the federal poverty threshold

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Since 1990 and the days of the Kentucky Preschool Program, a component of the Kentucky Education Reform Act, the state has maintained a sharp focus on childhood health care and education.

Most recently:

The Governor's Task Force on Early Childhood Development and Education established a unified vision, a coherent system of state level management and addressed issues related to collaboration and coordination to support early Childhood development.

The Governor's Task Force on Transforming Education in Kentucky took that a step further. Along with endorsing the recommendations of the Early Childhood Development and Education Task Force, the TEK Task Force made 6 recommendations of its own for expanding preschool opportunities and improving transitions between preschool and K-12.

To ensure our vision of Every Child Proficient and Prepared for Success – the Kentucky Board of Education and Kentucky Department of Education has included a Ready Students, Ready Schools initiative as part of our strategic plan and for achieving College/Career Readiness for all.

Our business, education and community partners – like Children Inc. – have been working non-stop to advocate and obtain resources; educate, engage and mobilize business, legislative and community leaders; invest time, expertise and financial resources and collaborate on programs



and initiatives that support high quality early education. Again, thank you for your efforts. Keep up the good work!

The Early Childhood Advisory Council (formerly Early Childhood Development Authority), of which your executive director is the chair, is responsible for the development or enhancement of high-quality systems of early childhood care and education designed to improve school readiness and strengthen state-level coordination and collaboration among the state's early childhood programs from birth to school entry.

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Ready Students

- Align early childhood standards with the new Kentucky Core Academic Standards for K-12
- Common definition of school readiness: each child enters school ready to engage in and benefit from early learning experiences that best promote the child's success. Includes five developmental areas:
 - Health and physical well-being
 - Language and communication development
 - Social and emotional development
 - Cognitive and general knowledge
 - Approaches to learning
- Readiness is not the same as school eligibility



The current focus is on Ready Students and Ready Schools – in other words are students ready for school?

And are schools ready for students?

As part of the Ready Student initiative, we've aligned Kentucky Early Childhood Standards for three-and-four-year-old children with the Kentucky Core Academic Kindergarten Standards in both Mathematics and English/Language Arts.

Just as the Common Core State Standards are aligned with college standards and expectations, preschool standards also must be aligned to Kentucky's K-12 academic standards to ensure students are ready for school and on a path to proficiency and college/career readiness.

So how do you define school readiness?

The Early Childhood Task Force has developed a definition of that focuses on the whole child: each child enters school ready to engage in and benefit from early learning experiences that best promote the child's success. This encompasses five developmental areas:

- Health and physical well-being
- Language and communication development
- Social and emotional development
- Cognitive and general knowledge and
- Approaches to learning – which recognizes that all children have different interest levels and attitudes toward learning

This common definition will ensure families, preschools, childcare facilities and schools are all on the same page and working toward the same goal.

I want to point out that school readiness is not the same as school eligibility.

All children who meet the legal age requirement are entitled to a public school education.

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Ready Students

- TEK recommendation:
Create common developmentally appropriate school readiness standards and instruments
- Develop and implement a statewide assessment or screening tool for incoming students that addresses all developmental areas



- Used to:
 - establish learning trajectories
 - determine eligibility for special services



Another one of the recommendations of the TEK task force is the creation of common developmentally appropriate school readiness standards and instruments.

The Kindergarten Entry Screener, which is scheduled for implementation this fall, will provide districts an element of measuring students' readiness for school in five domains: Adaptive, Cognitive, Motor, Communication, and Social-Emotional.

The Kindergarten Entry Screener will be aligned with **Kentucky's School Readiness Definition** and the **Kentucky Early Childhood Standards**.



- It will be used to:
 - establish learning trajectories and
 - determine eligibility for special services

The results of this assessment will also help schools determine their readiness.

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Ready Schools

- Schools must be ready to meet the educational needs of each child regardless of individual skills or abilities.
 - Is there strong leadership?
 - Are teachers effective?
 - Is the school engaged with families?
 - Does the school utilize a comprehensive and culturally relevant curriculum and continuous assessment?
 - Does the school provide all-day kindergarten?
- TEK Recommendation:
State lawmakers should provide full state funding for all-day kindergarten in all Kentucky schools

Schools must be ready to meet the educational needs of each child regardless of individual skills or abilities.

Based on research, some of the indicators of school readiness might be:

- Is there strong leadership?
- Are teachers effective?
- Is the school engaged with families?
- Does the school utilize a comprehensive and culturally relevant curriculum and continuous assessment?

Another question that is bound to come up is: does the school provide all-day kindergarten? Kentucky currently provides funding for half-day kindergarten.



However, recognizing the importance of early learning, 166 of our districts have elected to redirect resources and implement a full day program. Eight districts do not and offer only half-day programs.

So, the TEK Task force recommends that state lawmakers should provide full state funding for all-day kindergarten in all Kentucky schools. Again, this time around, we came up short.

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Primary Program Reviews

- Document performance of children in a cohort from entering kindergarten through 3rd grade
- Process would incorporate
 - Kindergarten readiness screening data
 - Diagnostic assessment data from the primary grades
 - Third grade reading data (starts in 2012-13 SY)
- New component of accountability model in 2015
- Provide means to measure effects of pre-kindergarten interventions



In order to ensure that a school is ready and that student progress made in the pre-kindergarten environment is sustained throughout the primary years, the TEK task force also recommended establishing a Primary Program Review.

The Program Review would document the performance of children in a cohort from the time they enter kindergarten through the 3rd grade.

The process would incorporate

- Kindergarten readiness


- screening data
 - Diagnostic assessment data from the primary grades
 - 3rd-grade reading data (starting this fall)

- Also take into consideration non-academic factors contributing to the development of the whole child
- New component of accountability model in 2015
- Provides a means to measure the effects of pre-kindergarten interventions

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Primary Program Reviews

- Assembled a team to develop
- Team responsible for:
 - Defining the goals and objectives for improving student learning
 - Strengthening the instructional and organizational effectiveness of every primary school





We have assembled a Primary Program Review team to begin the process of moving forward with this work.

- The team will be responsible for:
- Defining the goals and objectives for improving student learning
 - Strengthening the instructional and organizational effectiveness of every primary school

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System of Support

- Created through two main networks
 - Teachers -- Head Start, preschool and other instructional providers
 - Leaders -- Child care directors and principals
- Facilitated by regional training centers, higher education



- And finally we have developed a system of support for early childhood education
- Created through two main networks
 - Teachers -- Head Start, preschool and other instructional providers
 - Leaders -- Child care directors and principals
- Facilitated by regional training centers, higher education

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- The bottom line is our kids.
- Next-Generation Early Childhood Education means we are fulfilling a commitment to give ALL our children a high-quality start on learning --that seamlessly takes every child from being ready for school...

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...to being proficient and prepared for success – college/career ready.

Ready for school. Ready for life. It's what Children Inc. is about. It's what the Kentucky Department of Education is about.


It's what the future of Kentucky depends upon.




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**The Importance of
Early Childhood Education to
Kentucky's Future**

Terry Holliday, Ph.D.
Kentucky Education Commissioner

*Children Inc. 35th Anniversary Luncheon
May 23, 2012*





Congratulations once again. Keep up the good work.

Kentucky's children and their families are depending on you.